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AUTHOR Even, Mary Jane
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ABSTRACT

A review of the history of adult education (AE) graduate programs and their recent spurt of growth reveals four areas of concern (trends). First, the content of courses seems to be returning to basic, practical knowledge after an emphasis on knowledge without application. Secondly, diversity in the names of units governing AE graduate programs is noted. The issues surrounding these name changes are: public awareness of graduate programs, employability of graduates due to name given program, and diversity of employable skills of graduates. The third concern is the relationship of programs of study to job availability and placement. Younger students with less work experience may give rise to a need for a sound specialty basis for employability. The final concern deals with the philosophies of departments/units for degrees in adult education. The predominant philosophic stance centers on the dichotomy of basic content vs. process. It is feared that the issues of other more long-term educational units have been taken on philosophically. Perhaps a cooperative philosophy of adult education programs can be arrived at as a beginning to build on. (Author/MS)

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HAPSAE-COMMISION OF PROFESSORS

Saturday, November 8, 1975

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TRENDS AND ISSUES IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ADULT EDUCATION

Mary Jane Even, Ph.D.

It is a unique opportunity for an individual to live a life and experience (through participation) the historical development, ongoing trends and future orientations of an educational enterprise. Educational changes have normally been considered slow in development, slower in acceptance and even slower in action. The adage that a 50 year lag exists from development to action is not a myth. Yet, in adult education graduate programs, this myth has been destroyed.

For example in 1935, we know that William C. Hallenbeck and William Stacy were the first graduates with Ph.D.'s in adult education, in a program at Teachers College, Columbia University, which began in 1930 with the establishment of the first Department of Adult Education. In 1931, Ohio State University created a Department of Adult Education; the University of Chicago in 1935; the University of Michigan in 1938; the University of Wisconsin in 1939; the University of California at Berkeley in 1946; the University of California in Los Angeles in 1946; Cornell University in 1946; University of Buffalo in 1947; New York University in 1948; Syracuse University in 1951; Florida State University in 1953; Michigan State in 1955; Boston University in 1960, and the one with which I'm associated, the University of Nebraska in 1961.

As of yesterday there were 71 programs in North America. Last year at this time there were 58 programs.

In 1962 we could still count up and account for most M.A. and Ph.D. Adult Education graduates 1,348 of which 323 are Ph.D. graduates. We know this has quadrupled and wonder if we could ever again really keep track of graduates.

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The number of programs, the number of graduates have so increased that it is very wise to pause and digest the forces of history which have been catalyst to these developments, the resultant courses of study embodied in graduate programs, the rationale for the programs, and in so doing uncover the resultant issues and concerns that such a rapid adoption process produces.

In a short time this morning I would like to emphasize four areas which I believe have some bases for concern and problems (issues) as well as show trends of graduate programs. There are others. The ones I have selected seem most pertinent

I am indebted to Wes Meierhenry for documentation he made available to me on 15 programs in the United States which outlined names of institutions, their form, staff, program/courses, emphases of courses and perception of the field by the program faculty.

These are the four areas of concern:

1. The content of the courses in Adult Education Graduate programs.
2. The trends in names of units governing Adult Education programs.
3. The relationship of programs of study to job availability and placement.
4. Philosophies of departments/units for degrees in Adult Education.

The Content of the Courses in Adult Education Graduate Programs

It is my perception that when programs in universities began 40 years ago (1935) and up to about 1965, course content in programs clearly centered about specific functions, abilities and uniqueness of the adult, the adult as a learner, administration of adult agencies, program planning for adults, adults in groups, adult education research, general historical development of adult programs and current trends, basic principles of adult education, and research in adult education. It is my perception that these content items were the key elements to differentiate adult education graduate program courses from others. In them students learned specific competencies, functions, almost universal among graduate programs in their scope and sequence. (Of course institutional philosophies altered these forms, but the sameness was somewhat surprising and unique).

In about 1965, content of courses appear to become more esoteric, diverse pure process oriented, and the more functional interpolations of knowledge were placed in the hands of the students to relate to their experience, and diversity of their work orientations. The students were left on their own.

This path of content development seems to have continued and been strengthened. The result is somewhat disturbing.

There now seems in 1975 to be a tremendous movement to return to the basics. Faculty and students in this contient are asking for the practical content. The content in adult education which embodies the basics is instruction of adult learners, program planning, administration of adult education agencies, with supportive knowledge in psychology, sociology, philosophy, curriculum and instruction community development, and community education among others.

I believe the real issues in content stem from the heavy orientation placed on knowledge without application, that is courses of study which have been taught which do not provide basic functional abilities of adult education for all students. This is a major issue.

The Trends in Names of Units Governing Adult Education Programs.

It is interesting to note that, when first begun, departments of Adult Education carried the name of Adult (and Continuing) Education. Since about 1965, because of institutional forms and forces, including political and social concerns within universities, names began to alter, units for programs began to shift, faculty began to shift emphases.

At present there are many names for units and many combinations of academic fields which are included in names for adult and continuing education. There are about 5 I know of -- and perhaps more -- which use Adult and Continuing Education -- Georgia, Nebraska (M.A.), Pennslyvania (M.A.), Iowa (M.A. and Ph.D.) and Maine.

Others include: Department of Administration Higher and Continuing Education, Division of Continuing Education of Adults - Illinois; Adult Education and Instructional Services - Wyoming; Department of Continuing and Vocational Education,

Joint Program of Colleges of Agriculture, Life Science, Education, Family Resources and Consumer Services - Wisconsin; Florida - Division of Educational Management Systems; Adult and Community College Education - North Carolina; Ohio - Faculty of Vocational Technical Education; Michigan - Program of Graduate Studies in Continuing Education; Boston - Community College and Community Education; and Nebraska - Ph.D. Community and Human Resources.

This is the trend. The issues surrounding these changes center on: public awareness of graduate programs; employability of graduates due to name given program; diversity of employable skills of graduates. At some point the Commission of Professors needs to speak to this concern.

I might interject that as the name is changed, more staff are usually added. However the new staff are usually not trained adult educators; some say this is an issue. Some say this is O.K. Some question the advisability.

And another underlying expression by this diversity is that Adult Education is a field of study rather than a discipline - is this what we mean to imply?

The Relationship of Programs of Study to Job Availability and Placement

Students come into our M.A. (and Ph.D.) programs from diverse backgrounds. They wish to upgrade abilities on their job, seek abilities to enhance job options, learn new knowledge for self improvement, and among other take their place in the field of adult education. Many have come with a specific work orientation. However, the trend now is that many do not. This trend, of having younger students with less work experience, means that we may need to provide a sound specialty bases for employability.

If you're a nurse, a pharmacist or a police man, you do well in our programs because you have some definable skill and ability to begin. Today many students come with short range work experience and no special area of work.

The trend has been one from students with specialized work orientations to the younger students with little specific arena of application.

The issue becomes one of producing generalists or specialists, that is, of

enabling students to have sound functional skills and relating these to an arena of work as opposed to a broad based set of knowledge, skills and abilities where generalized and liberal studies is the emphasis.

The question asked: which is the most employable today? Another question is, is employability of our students a major concern? Can departments provide specialization for persons? Does placement of students gear program development?

Philosophies of Departments/Units for Degrees in Adult Education

As each institution has its philosophy, each unit of program and each person/faculty member, there are diverse philosophies today among Adult Education units/departments. This trend in issues (why adult education; and whether it is a discipline or a field of study) appeared early in the development of university programs but did not appear to influence programs. Today it is clearly a determinant of programs.

The philosophic stance of adult education units in universities are presently centered around the age old dichotomy of basic content vs. process; of product vs. process; or esoteric vs. practical. It didn't always exist with such force. In the early days, there appears to be a balance provided in programs/courses of both the content and process, the more esoteric and the practical.

As we have developed, and because we have put our educational enterprise into practice so rapidly, we have, I fear (right or wrong) taken on the issues philosophically of other more long-term educational units, i.e., elementary and secondary and administrative education.

The issues which result are multiple. Should we have a cooperative philosophy of adult education programs? Don't say no too quickly. I believe we can agree on quite a lot. Can we build on what we do agree on? Could we as a profession in our unique and speedy formation, exhibit a rare quality of unity in philosophy. I believe this issue needs to supercede a great many other issues.

These are my perceptions from the literature, research, meetings. I know others have spoken of some or parts of all of these trends and issues, but I have identified

four trends and a few issues related to these trends I believe to be of priority in our discussions. Perhaps you can add others. We can discuss them.